

**AMENDMENTS****Amendments To The Claims:**

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1 - 328. Canceled.

329. (Previously presented) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:

an aqueous base;

about 7.5 lb./bbl. water soluble polymer; and,

about 2 lb./bbl. surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer;

wherein said water soluble polymer, said surfactant, and said association provide

said water-based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss

control properties comprising low shear viscosity.

330. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329

wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether

sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers,

and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts

thereof, and combinations thereof.

331. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329

wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl

ether sulfates.

332. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329

wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

333. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329

wherein said surfactant is sodium tridecyl ether sulfate.

334. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329 wherein said low shear viscosity is about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

335. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329 wherein said low shear viscosity is about 100,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

336. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 331 wherein said low shear viscosity is about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

337. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 332 wherein said low shear viscosity is about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

338. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 333 wherein said low shear viscosity is about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

339. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329 further comprising a concentration of non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase.

340. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 339 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

341. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other a solid bridging agent.

342. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 331 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

343. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 334 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

344. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 336 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

345. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 337 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

346. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

347. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 341 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

348. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 342 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

349. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329 wherein said water soluble polymer is selected from the group consisting of water soluble starches and modified versions thereof, water-soluble polysaccharides and modified versions thereof, water-soluble celluloses and modified versions thereof, water soluble polyacrylamides and copolymers thereof, and combinations thereof.

350. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 341 wherein said water soluble polymer is selected from the group consisting of water soluble starches and modified versions thereof, water-soluble polysaccharides and modified versions thereof, water-soluble celluloses and modified versions thereof, water soluble polyacrylamides and copolymers thereof, and combinations thereof.

351. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 344 wherein said water soluble polymer is selected from the group consisting of water soluble starches and modified versions thereof, water-soluble polysaccharides and modified versions thereof, water-soluble celluloses and modified versions thereof, water soluble polyacrylamides and copolymers thereof, and combinations thereof.

352. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 329 wherein said surfactant produces a reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid.

353. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 352 wherein said reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid is from about 25 to about 40 nN/m.

354. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 341 wherein said surfactant produces a reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid.

355. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 354 wherein said reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid is from about 25 to about 40 nN/m.

356. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 346 wherein said surfactant produces a reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid.

357. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 356 wherein said reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid is from about 25 to about 40 nN/m.

358. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 351 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about 500,000 to about 2,500,000.

359. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 351 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about from about 700,000 to about 1,200,000.

360. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 351 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

361. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 351 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified starches having a weight average molecular weight of from about 200,000 to about 2,500,000.

362. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 351 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the

group consisting of synthetically modified starches having a weight average molecular weight of from about 600,000 to about 1,000,000.

363. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 361 wherein said synthetically modified starches comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

364. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 358 wherein said synthetically modified polysaccharides comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

365. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 329 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

366. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 331 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

367. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 341 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

368. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 344 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

369. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 345 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

370. (Previously presented) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
about 7.5 lb./bbl. water soluble polymer;  
about 2 lb./bbl. surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer; and  
a concentration of a non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase;  
wherein said water soluble polymer, said surfactant, and said association provide  
said water-based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss  
control properties comprising low shear viscosity.

371. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 370 wherein said surfactant is sodium tridecyl ether sulfate.

372. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 370 wherein said water soluble polymer is selected from the group consisting of water soluble starches and modified versions thereof, water-soluble polysaccharides and modified versions thereof, water-soluble celluloses and modified versions thereof, water soluble polyacrylamides and copolymers thereof, and combinations thereof.

373. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 371 wherein said water soluble polymer is selected from the group consisting of water soluble starches and modified versions thereof, water-soluble polysaccharides and modified versions thereof, water-soluble celluloses and modified versions thereof, water soluble polyacrylamides and copolymers thereof, and combinations thereof.

374. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 371 wherein said water soluble polymer is a combination comprising from about 40 to about 60 wt.% xanthan polysaccharide and from about 40 to about 60 wt.% synthetically modified starch comprising one or more functional groups selected from the group consisting of carboxymethyl, propylene glycol, and epichlorohydrin functional groups.

375. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 371 wherein said water soluble polymer is a combination comprising about 50 wt.% xanthan polysaccharide and about 50 wt.% synthetically modified starch comprising one or more functional groups selected from the group consisting of carboxymethyl, propylene glycol, and epichlorohydrin functional groups.

376. (Previously presented) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
an aqueous base;  
about 7.5 lb./bbl. of water soluble polymer comprising a combination of about 50 wt.% xanthan polysaccharide and about 50 wt.% synthetically modified starch comprising one or more functional groups selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin functional group;  
about 2 lb./bbl. sodium tridecyl ether sulfate;  
wherein said water soluble polymer, said surfactant, and said association provide said water-based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprising low shear rate viscosity; and



wherein said water-based fluid consists essentially of additives other than solid bridging agents.

377. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 376 further comprising a concentration of a non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase.

378. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 377 wherein said non-toxic water emulsifiable material is a water insoluble material selected from the group consisting of olefins, paraffins, water insoluble glycols, water insoluble esters, water insoluble Fischer-Tropsch reaction products, and combinations thereof.

379. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 376 further comprising an alkali metal salt of a compound selected from the group consisting of a thiosulfate and a thiosulfonate.

380. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 377 further comprising an alkali metal salt of a compound selected from the group consisting of a thiosulfate and a thiosulfonate.

381. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 376 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

382. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 377 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

383. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 379 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

384. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 380 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

385. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 376 wherein said low shear rate viscosity is about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

386. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 377 wherein said low shear rate viscosity is about 100,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

387. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 378 wherein said low shear rate viscosity is about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

388. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 379 wherein said low shear rate viscosity is about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

389. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 380 wherein said low shear rate viscosity is about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

390. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 377 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol. %.

391. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 390 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

Claims 392-412. (Canceled).

413. (currently amended) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
an aqueous base comprising a concentration of about 20 vol. % or less non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase;  
a quantity of water soluble polymer comprising polymers selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified starches having a weight average molecular weight of from about 200,000 to about 2,500,000; and,  
an amount of surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer;  
wherein said quantity, said amount, and said association provide said water based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprising a low shear rate viscosity of about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

414. (Canceled).

415. (previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 413 wherein said effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprise a low shear rate viscosity of about 100,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

416. (previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 413 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

417. (previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 413 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

418. (previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 413 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

419. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 415 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

420. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 415 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

421. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 415 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

422. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 415 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

423. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 420 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

424. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 421 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

425. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[414]]~~ 413 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml/30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

426. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 420 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml/30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

427. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 424 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml/30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

428. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 424 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 1 ml/30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

429. (Currently amended) The water based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[414]]~~ 413 wherein said surfactant produces a reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid.

430. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 429 wherein said reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid is from about 25 to about 40 nN/m.

431. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 424 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol. %.

432. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[414]]~~413 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about 500,000 to about 2,500,000.

433. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[414]]~~413 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about from about 700,000 to about 1,200,000.

434. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[414]]~~413 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

435. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[434]]~~431 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

436. (Canceled).

437. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[414]]~~413 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises polymers selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified starches having a weight average molecular weight of from about 600,000 to about 1,000,000.

438. (currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[436]]~~432 wherein said synthetically modified polysaccharides comprise a functional group selected

from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

439. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[437]]~~413 wherein said synthetically modified starches comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

440. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[414]]~~ 413 having a density of about 7.9 lb/gal. or more.

441. (Currently amended) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:

an aqueous base;

a quantity of water soluble polymer comprising one or more polymers selected

from the group consisting of synthetically modified starches having a

weight average molecular weight of from about 200,000 to about

2,500,000;

an amount of surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer;

wherein said quantity, said amount, and said association provide said water-based

drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties; and

a concentration of about 20 vol.% or less non-toxic water emulsifiable material as

an internal phase, said surfactant being effective to emulsify said water

emulsifiable material and to produce emulsion droplets having an average

diameter of about 30 microns or less.

442. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

443. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

444. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

445. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said surfactant is sodium tridecyl ether sulfate.

446. (Previously presented) ) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said surfactant is effective to emulsify said water emulsifiable material and to produce emulsion droplets having an average diameter of about 20 microns or less.

447. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said surfactant is effective to emulsify said water emulsifiable material and to produce emulsion droplets having an average diameter of about 15 microns or less.

448. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said surfactant is effective to emulsify said water emulsifiable material and to produce emulsion droplets having an average diameter of about 5 microns or less.



449. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprise a low shear rate viscosity of about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

450. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

451. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said concentration is about 5 vol.%.

452. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 446 wherein said concentration is about 5 vol.%.

453. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said non-toxic water emulsifiable material is a water insoluble material selected from the group consisting of olefins, paraffins, water insoluble glycols, water insoluble esters, water insoluble Fischer-Tropsch reaction products, and combinations thereof.

454. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said water emulsifiable material is a water insoluble material selected from the group consisting of olefins, paraffins, water insoluble glycols, and combinations thereof.

455. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 446 wherein said water emulsifiable material is a water insoluble material selected from the group consisting of olefins, paraffins, water insoluble glycols, and combinations thereof.

456. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other a solid bridging agent.

457. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 446 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

458. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 452 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

459. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

460. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 448 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

461. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 1 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

462. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 448 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 1 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

463.-464. (Canceled).

465. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 441 wherein said surfactant produces a reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid.

466. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 465 wherein said reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid is from about 25 to about 40 nN/m.

467. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 446 wherein said surfactant produces a reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid.

468. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 467 wherein said reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid is from about 25 to about 40 nN/m.

469. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[463]]~~441 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about 500,000 to about 2,500,000.

470. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of any of claims ~~[[463]]~~441 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about from about 700,000 to about 1,200,000.

471. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[463]]~~441 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

472. (Canceled).

473. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[463]]~~ 441 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about 600,000 to about 1,000,000.

474. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[463]]441~~ wherein said synthetically modified starches comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

475. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[464]]469~~ wherein said synthetically modified polysaccharides comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

476. (Currently amended) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
an aqueous base comprising a concentration of about 20 vol.% or less non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase;  
about 2 lb./bbl. or more water soluble polymer comprising one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified starches having a weight average molecular weight of from about 200,000 to about 2,500,000; and,  
about 0.2 lb./bbl. or more surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer;  
wherein said water soluble polymer, said surfactant, and said association provide said water-based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties.

477. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether

sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

478. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

479. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

480. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said surfactant is sodium tridecyl ether sulfate.

481. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprise a low shear rate viscosity of about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

482. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

483. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 479 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

484. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

485. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 479 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

486. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 480 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

487. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml/30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

488. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 486 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml/30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

489.-491. (Canceled).

492. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said surfactant produces a reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid.

493. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 492 wherein said reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid is from about 25 to about 40 nN/m.

494. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 486 wherein said surfactant produces a reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid.

495. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 494 wherein said reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid is from about 25 to about 40 nN/m.

496. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 491 wherein said surfactant produces a reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid.

497. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 496 wherein said reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid is from about 25 to about 40 nN/m.

498. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about 500,000 to about 2,500,000.

499. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of from about 700,000 to about 1,200,000.

500. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

501. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 486 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

502. (Canceled).

503. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the

group consisting of synthetically modified starches having a weight average molecular weight of from about 600,000 to about 1,000,000.

504. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[502]]~~476 wherein said synthetically modified starches comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

505. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[503]]~~498 wherein said synthetically modified polysaccharides comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

506. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 476 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises about 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

507. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 486 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises about 50/50 wt.% modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch.

508.-522. (Canceled).

523. (Currently amended) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
an aqueous base comprising about 20 vol.% or less non-toxic water emulsifiable material;

a quantity of water soluble polymer comprising one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified starches having a



weight average molecular weight of from about 200,000 to about 2,500,000; and,

an amount of from about 0.2 lb/bbl to about 4 lb/bbl surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer;

wherein said quantity, said amount, and said association provide said water-based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties.

524. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 523 wherein said effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprise a low shear rate viscosity of about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

525. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 523 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

526. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 523 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

527. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 523 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

528. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 524 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether

sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

529. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 524 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

530. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 524 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

531. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 523 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

532. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 525 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

533. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 528 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

534. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 531 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

535. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 532 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

536. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 533 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml/30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

537. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 533 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 1 ml/30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

538. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 531 wherein said surfactant produces a reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid.

539. (Previously presented) The water based drilling fluid of claim 538 wherein said reduced surface tension of said water based drilling fluid is from about 25 to about 40 nN/m.

540. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 523 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

541. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 523 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about 500,000 to about 2,500,000.

542. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 523 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about from about 700,000 to about 1,200,000.

543. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 523 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

544. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 533 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

545. (Canceled).

546. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 523 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified starches having a weight average molecular weight of from about 600,000 to about 1,000,000.

547. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[545]]~~541 wherein said synthetically modified polysaccharides comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

548. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[546]]~~523 wherein said synthetically modified starches comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

549. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 531 having a density of about 7.9 lb/gal. or more.

550-575. (Canceled).

576. (Previously presented) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
an aqueous base;

a quantity of water soluble polymer selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified starches having a weight average molecular weight of from about 200,000 to about 2,500,000; and, an amount of surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer; wherein said quantity, said amount, and said association provide said water based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties.

577. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 576 wherein said effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprise a low shear rate viscosity of about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

578. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 576 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

579. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 576 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

580. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 576 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

581. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 576 further comprising a concentration of non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase,

said quantity being sufficient to provide effective lubrication properties to said drilling fluid.

582. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 577 further comprising a concentration of non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase, said quantity being sufficient to provide effective lubrication properties to said drilling fluid.

583. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 578 further comprising a concentration of non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase, said quantity being sufficient to provide effective lubrication properties to said drilling fluid.

584. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 579 further comprising a concentration of non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase, said quantity being sufficient to provide effective lubrication properties to said drilling fluid.

585. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 580 further comprising a concentration of non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase, said quantity being sufficient to provide effective lubrication properties to said drilling fluid.

586. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 576 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

587. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 581 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

588. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 582 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

589. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 583 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

590. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 584 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

591. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 585 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

592. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 576 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

593. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 581 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

594. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 586 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

595. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 586 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 1 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

596. (Canceled).

597. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 581 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol. %.

598. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 587 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol. %.

599. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim ~~[[592]]~~593 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol. %.

600. (Currently amended) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 576 wherein said synthetically modified ~~polysaccharides~~starches comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

601. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 587 wherein said synthetically modified starches comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

602. (Previously presented) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 587 having a density of about 7.9 lb/gal. or more.

603. (New) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:

an aqueous base comprising a concentration of about 20 vol. % or less non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase;

a quantity of water soluble polymer comprising polymers selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified polysaccharides comprise a functional



group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group; and,

an amount of surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer;

wherein said quantity, said amount, and said association provide said water based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprising a low shear rate viscosity of about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

604. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 603 wherein said effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprise a low shear rate viscosity of about 100,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

605. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 603 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

606. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 603 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

607. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 603 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

608. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 603 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

609. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 607 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

610. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 609 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

611. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 609 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 1 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

612. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 603 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

613. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 603 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about from about 700,000 to about 1,200,000.

614. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 603 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

615. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 612 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

616. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 603 having a density of about 7.9 lb/gal. or more.

617. (New) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
an aqueous base;

a quantity of water soluble polymer comprising one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified polysaccharides comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group;

an amount of surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer, wherein said quantity, said amount, and said association provide said water-based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties; and a concentration of about 20 vol.% or less non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase, said surfactant being effective to emulsify said water emulsifiable material and to produce emulsion droplets having an average diameter of about 30 microns or less.

618. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

619. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

620. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

621. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said surfactant is sodium tridecyl ether sulfate.

622. (New) ) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said surfactant is effective to emulsify said water emulsifiable material and to produce emulsion droplets having an average diameter of about 20 microns or less.

623. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said surfactant is effective to emulsify said water emulsifiable material and to produce emulsion droplets having an average diameter of about 15 microns or less.

624. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said surfactant is effective to emulsify said water emulsifiable material and to produce emulsion droplets having an average diameter of about 5 microns or less.

625. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprise a low shear rate viscosity of about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

626. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

627. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 625 wherein said concentration is about 5 vol.%.

628. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said non-toxic water emulsifiable material is a water insoluble material selected from the group

consisting of olefins, paraffins, water insoluble glycols, water insoluble esters, water insoluble Fischer-Tropsch reaction products, and combinations thereof.

629. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said water emulsifiable material is a water insoluble material selected from the group consisting of olefins, paraffins, water insoluble glycols, and combinations thereof.

630. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

631. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 626 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

632. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 627 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

633. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

634. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 1 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

635. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said water modified polysaccharides have a weight average molecular weight of about 500,000 to about 2,500,000.

636. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of any of claims 617 wherein said modified polysaccharides have a weight average molecular weight of about from about 700,000 to about 1,200,000.

637. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 617 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

638. (New) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
an aqueous base comprising a concentration of about 20 vol.% or less non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an internal phase;  
about 2 lb./bbl. or more water soluble polymer comprising one or more synthetically modified polysaccharides comprising a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group; and,  
about 0.2 lb./bbl. or more surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer;  
wherein said water soluble polymer, said surfactant, and said association provide said water-based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties.

639. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 638 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

640. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 638 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

641. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 638 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

642. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 638 wherein said surfactant is sodium tridecyl ether sulfate.

643. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 640 wherein said effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprise a low shear rate viscosity of about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

644. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 638 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

645. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 643 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

646. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 638 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

647. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 644 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

648. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 638 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

649. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 638 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about 500,000 to about 2,500,000.

650. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 638 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of from about 700,000 to about 1,200,000.

651. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 638 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

652. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 64 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

653. (New) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
an aqueous base comprising a concentration of about 20 vol.% or less non-toxic  
water emulsifiable material as an internal phase;  
about 2 lb./bbl. or more water soluble polymer comprising about 50/50 wt.%  
modified xanthan polysaccharide and synthetically modified starch; and,  
about 0.2 lb./bbl. or more surfactant in association with said water soluble  
polymer;  
wherein said water soluble polymer, said surfactant, and said association provide  
said water-based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss  
control properties.



654. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 653 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

655. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 653 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

656. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 653 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

657. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 653 wherein said surfactant is sodium tridecyl ether sulfate.

658. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 655 wherein said effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprise a low shear rate viscosity of about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

659. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 653 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

660. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 658 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

661. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 659 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other a solid bridging agent.

662. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 660 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

663. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 658 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

664. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 658 wherein said water soluble polymers comprise one or more functional groups selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

665. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 662 wherein said water soluble polymers comprise one or more functional groups selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

666. (New) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
an aqueous base comprising about 20 vol.% or less non-toxic water emulsifiable material;  
a quantity of water soluble polymer comprising polymers selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified polysaccharides comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group; and,  
an amount of from about 0.2 lb/bbl to about 4 lb/bbl surfactant in association with said water soluble polymer;

wherein said quantity, said amount, and said association provide said water-based drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties.

667. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said effective rheology and fluid loss control properties comprise a low shear rate viscosity of about 70,000 cP or more upon exposure to 0.3 rpm, measured with a Brookfield viscometer at 75 °F.

668. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates, alkyl ether sulfates, alkyl sulfonates, ethoxylated esters, ethoxylated glycoside esters, alcohol ethers, and phosphated esters comprising about 8 to about 18 carbon atoms, alkali metal salts thereof, and combinations thereof.

669. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said surfactant is selected from the group consisting of alkyl sulfates and alkyl ether sulfates.

670. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said surfactant comprises an alkyl ether sulfate.

671. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

672. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 669 wherein said fluid consists essentially of additives other than a solid bridging agent.

673. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 5 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

674. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said effective fluid loss control properties comprise a fluid loss of about 1 ml./30 min. or less using the standard dynamic filtration fluid loss test.

675. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

676. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 669 wherein said concentration is from about 2 to about 20 vol.%.

677. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about 500,000 to about 2,500,000.

678. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight of about from about 700,000 to about 1,200,000.

679. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

680. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 676 wherein said water-soluble polymer comprises xanthan polysaccharides.

681. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 666 having a density of about 7.9 lb/gal. or more.

682. (New) A water-based drilling fluid comprising:  
an aqueous base;

a quantity of water soluble polymer;

an amount of sodium tridecyl ether sulfate in association with said water soluble polymer;

wherein said quantity, said amount, and said association provide said water-based

drilling fluid with effective rheology and fluid loss control properties; and

a concentration of about 20 vol.% or less non-toxic water emulsifiable material as an

internal phase, said surfactant being effective to emulsify said water emulsifiable

material and to produce emulsion droplets having an average diameter of about 30

microns or less.

683. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 682 wherein said water soluble polymer is selected from the group consisting of:

one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of synthetically modified

starches having a weight average molecular weight of from about 200,000 to

about 2,500,000; and

one or more polymers selected from the group consisting of modified polysaccharides

having a weight average molecular weight of about 500,000 to about 2,500,000.

684. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 682 wherein

said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group

consisting of synthetically modified starches having a weight average molecular

weight of from about 600,000 to about 1,000,000;

said water soluble polymer comprises one or more polymers selected from the group

consisting of modified polysaccharides having a weight average molecular weight

of from about 700,000 to about 1,200,000.

685. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 682 wherein said synthetically modified polysaccharides comprise a functional group selected from the group consisting of a carboxymethyl group, a propylene glycol group, and an epichlorohydrin group.

686. (New) The water-based drilling fluid of claim 685 wherein said surfactant is effective to emulsify said water emulsifiable material and to produce emulsion droplets having an average diameter of about 20 microns or less.

687. (New) The method of claim 523 wherein the quantity of water-soluble polymer is from about 2 lb/bbl to about 7.5 lb/bbl.

688. (New) The method of claim 576 wherein the quantity of water-soluble polymer is from about 2 lb/bbl to about 7.5 lb/bbl.

689. (New) The method of claim 603 wherein the quantity of water-soluble polymer is from about 2 lb/bbl to about 7.5 lb/bbl.

690. (New) The method of claim 617 wherein the quantity of water-soluble polymer is from about 2 lb/bbl to about 7.5 lb/bbl.

691. (New) The method of claim 638 wherein the quantity of water-soluble polymer is from about 2 lb/bbl to about 7.5 lb/bbl.

692. (New) The method of claim 653 wherein the quantity of water-soluble polymer is from about 2 lb/bbl to about 7.5 lb/bbl.

693. (New) The method of claim 666 wherein the quantity of water-soluble polymer is from about 2 lb/bbl to about 7.5 lb/bbl.

694. (New) The method of claim 682 wherein the quantity of water-soluble polymer is from about 2 lb/bbl to about 7.5 lb/bbl.